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ABSTRACT

Differences between Cree and North American middle class patterns of interactional etiquette are discussed. Interactional etiquette is defined as the verbal and non-verbal conventions that are involved in communication among individuals, including greeting, leave taking, asking questions, disagreement, and interruption. The Cree communicate more with silence, interrupt less, and ask questions less directly than non-Indian North Americans. Old people, especially old men, play the central role in traditional education. The result is a potential for misunderstanding and conflict in classrooms which are based on the Anglo middle class North American model, often with a woman teacher. Teachers should be sensitive to the patterns of interactional etiquette of their students. The successes and failures of a pilot television project, attempting to incorporate principles of Cree learning and teaching are described. The Cree speak two varieties of their own language as well as a distinctive variety of English. It is maintained that attempts to teach children to use standard English are ineffective and tend to make all teaching seem to the Cree like the imposition of an alien culture. (Author/JB)

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Reflections on Cree Interactional Etiquette: Educational Implications

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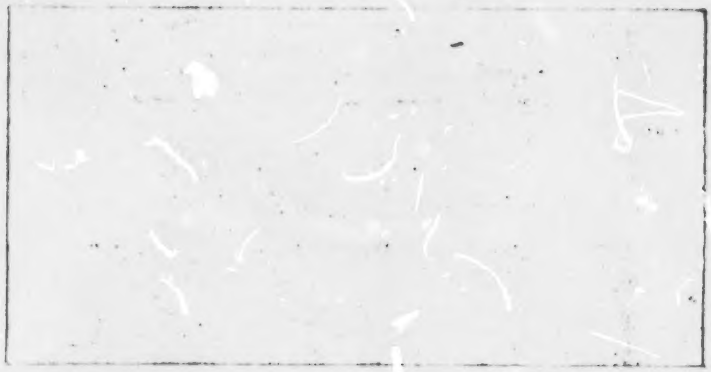

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REFLECTIONS ON CREE INTERACTIONAL ETIQUETTE: EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

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The so alization of children is extremely variable cross-culturally.[1] However, in spite of the cultural and linguistic diversity of North America, the school system has remained sharply middle class in its orientation. The underlying philosophical assumption seems to be that this is the most effective way of producing citizens with shared knowledge and values. In practice, though, the results have often been ineffective learning on the part of minority group children, leading to interpretations of genetic deficiency and cultural impoverishment.

In recent years, the inadequacy of such explanations has been recognized increasingly. The neutral possibility, that educational problems are a situation to be dealt with, is now commonly held among many teachers and educators. The reverse position, that native or ethnic children have special, valuable resources to give the school system, is only beginning to be understood. The suggestions given in this paper will be geared to Cree children in northern Canada, but it is the author's belief that many of the pedagogical techniques which prove effective with Cree children will also prove effective in the educational system generally.

One of the most obvious strategies to increase the nativeness of education for native children has been to encourage the training of native teachers. This has, however, not proved simple. The Alberta Native Teachers Association has grown in membership from seven to fourteen, but these teachers feel that they are not Indian teachers, but simply teachers. That is, for native people, the role of teacher overrides ethnic origin and imposes a

non-native cultural environment on the classroom by definition. Changes, then, will have to be in the nature and philosophy of the education.

There is little support for advanced education within native communities. A native student of our acquaintance was proud of her B.A. from the University of Alberta until her family referred to her as a "fake white woman." That is, advanced degrees do not make one an Indian person. The terms moniyaw (white man) and nehiyaw (Indian person) are frequently used as labels of behavior rather than as ethnic identification. To label an Indian person as moniyaw means that he/she is behaving like a white man, this being negatively valued. The term moniyaw is most often glossed as "loud-mouthed." The reasons for this judgment are complex and not really involving loudness of speech. Rather, the individual conveys a spirit of aggressiveness rather than the spirit of consensus which is the Indian way. This is signaled by failure to pause between turns at speaking, thereby indicating recognition of the seriousness of both the last speech and the reply. Silence makes the utterance important, and its absence implies failure to listen and learn. White men also fail to signify their assent or listening by murmuring ehe (yes) at proper intervals or segments of another's speech. If there is a conflict between the verbal message of good will and open mindedness and the nonverbal message which accompanies it, the nonverbal aggression, according to Cree etiquette, will outweigh the intent. The proper response to aggression is to withdraw, so few white men realize that their behavior is offensive.

It is very difficult for a school teacher not to behave like a moniyaw. The role itself demands a control of others' behavior which is not consistent with the native etiquette. Educators have long defined the problem as a linguistic one, i.e., that native children have difficulty in school because English is not their native language (e.g. Wax, Wax and Dumont 1964). But

our own studies, and those of Philips (1970) make it clear that the same withdrawal from the classroom situation occurs when Indian students do not speak their native language. Rather, the crucial variable is that of the communicative system which these children bring with them to the classroom. The structure of that system is an interactional one, not a linguistic one. We will refer to this system as "Interactional Etiquette," and argue that effective education for native children must establish a point of contact and translation between systems of etiquette as well as between languages. The communicative resources of a Cree child are only partially verbal, and the classroom failure to communicate and to realize lack of communication is largely, although not exclusively, nonverbal.

Most remedial programs designed for native students are based on the assumption that native language and culture are merely a means to ease the transition to the middle class white school system. For native people whose concern is to maintain their language and culture, this is not an acceptable educational philosophy. Some years ago, the short-lived Alberta Indian Education Center argued that the need for educational programs was to release verbal fluency in the native language so that fluency could then be sought in any language. Bloomfield in 1927 argued that many individuals under conditions of culture contact do not obtain real fluency in any language. They are not exposed to abstract philosophical thought in either the native or the contact language. The aim of any serious program should be to provide each individual with sufficient command of the linguistic and cultural resources of both worlds so that he may make a real choice between them, incorporating in a uniquely personal way the best of both. This aim cannot be realized easily, and cannot be realized at all within the classroom. The two major problems are the economic viability of native communities and the social structure of

prejudice in the larger society. Yet the schools can be leaders in the social change which is necessary, particularly because of their direct and enforced contact with individuals from the native culture.

The most important issue for native people has been their increasing control over the education of their own children. In practice, this has meant that a small portion of the curriculum has been devoted to native language and crafts. Problems have included lack of experienced and trained personnel, lack of appropriate teaching materials, and political ramifications of educational programs. The native drop-out rate before completion of high school remains in the neighborhood of 95% in spite of efforts over the last decade at least.

The author has been involved in a number of projects to produce native teaching materials. The importance of language as a symbol of native identification emerges clearly from all such efforts. Native people believe that the speaker of a language "owns" it and that to teach the language to outsiders gives them some control or power over native people. In one program, videotapes were made of native cultural activities. These were prepared only in Cree, inspite of the fact that many of the children in the intended audience were not fluent in Cree. The rationale was that then white men would not be able to use them; they rightfully belonged to the Cree people. Dance exhibitions for these tapes became a community affair, and the unannounced taping had an audience of at least fifty people, of all ages. Participants enjoyed seeing the videotapes, but felt that they were made by white men (fully correct). An interesting contrast is found in the experiment of Adair and Worth to teach Navajo Indians how to make films. In that study, the film made by a Navajo art student was said to be "in English," although the film had no sound track. It is clear that really adequate materials will have to be prepared using native film crews as well as native actors. To date, there has been little such work for classrooms.

Another issue which tends to dominate discussion of native-oriented teaching materials is orthography for written Cree. In some parts of the province, syllabics are used because they are the Indian way to write, i.e., different from English script. In other areas, the syllabics are associated with the missionaries and people do not want to use them. We participated in one program where native people who would be teaching Cree language in the schools came together to prepare materials. Many of these people, without any formal training, managed to provide considerable insight into the structure of their language and the way in which it could be taught effectively to native children with limited fluency. Many favored syllabics because they forced learners to become aware of the CV-CV structure of Cree and to speak more correctly. Cree is a language in which many syllables are shortened in rapid speech, producing consonant clusters which are morphologically incomplete. Another issue in writing surrounds the politics of standardized materials for Alberta Cree. The conference described above (see Darnell and Vanek 1973a; 1973b) decided that the dialect of central Alberta should be taken as a standard. This is fully in line with the native notion of consensus, given that northern Alberta Cree saw themselves as central to the distribution of Cree in the province, and southern Alberta Cree saw themselves as central to the province. The consensus did not, therefore contribute in any serious way to solution of the standardization question. The issue of orthography continues to be a stumbling block to the preparation of adequate materials (see Urion 1978 for a description of one meeting devoted to this question).

Cree children are conceived differently as social persons than white children in the same areas. They are not expected to impose upon adults, although they are permitted to be present at almost all adult activities. They are expected to be able to listen quietly by the age of three or four

and to learn from what they hear. Cree children have considerable autonomy and responsibility at a very early age. They are permitted to have their own opinions as long as these do not impinge on anyone else. They are not protected in their activities as are middle class children. Frequently, they are expected to watch younger siblings for long periods of time. Parents do not intervene in children's affairs. It is not appropriate in Cree etiquette for anyone to express an opinion for someone else. When asked if his son liked moosemeat, an acquaintance of ours replied that he liked moosemeat. By answering the question that should have been asked, he avoided correcting a mistake in etiquette but did not insult his son, who had a right to express his opinions himself. This is not an unusual kind of occurrence and is often puzzling to white people.

Cree society is age-graded and sex-stratified. Who says something is often more important than what is said. Men have far greater status than women (school teachers, of course, are usually women), and old people acquire status as a result of their age. The real leaders, the elders, do not speak directly but younger men, usually bilingual, speak for them. The Cree word for an official chief can be translated as a fake leader; that is, his authority comes from the elders who advise him, and he is basically a bureaucrat.

Cree notions of learning and teaching are quite different from the ones which the child is exposed to in school. The traditional teacher is an old man, who is called Grandfather out of respect, whether this is the actual kinship relation or not. Kin terms, real or fictive, are used to structure the social world, and virtually all important social relationships are recognized by kinship terms. The teacher, of course, is not labeled as a kins man, and, indeed, rarely has social contact with the native community in which the school is located. Old people, because of their closer contact

with the spirit world and their withdrawal from the everyday work world, are considered the ideal persons to impart the wisdom of Cree tradition to the new generation. Old women, once they are past the age of childbearing, come to have some of the same aura of spiritual power. The old man speaks a style of Cree which is not used by other people and is usually called "High Cree." In fact, many of the archaic words he uses are not understood even by middle-aged adults who speak Cree well. Younger people who wish to learn the traditional stories will listen carefully to an old man and learn from him. They are expected to practice privately. When an old man dies, it is expected that someone else will come forward who has practiced the traditional stories and is prepared to take his place. This leads many white people to believe that the old traditions are dying out, but this does not seem to be happening among the Cree of northern Alberta. There are more than 70,000 Cree people in northern Canada and both the language and the culture are viable. This does not mean, of course, that native people are not seriously concerned with the active maintenance of their traditions.

Styles of teaching are particular to Cree etiquette. Teaching of skills is normally nonverbal, depending on observation and effort by the child to duplicate what he sees. The verbal explanations of the schoolteacher are often puzzling, since Cree children are used to watching, attempting, observing their own mistakes, and trying again until the product is right. Adults rarely intervene in this process, believing that it is the only way to learn. Moral or philosophical teaching, in contrast, is primarily verbal and it comes from the old man who talks to the children. His talk is often in stories, such that the child must relate the point of the story to his own life. Only in this way will he really understand the lesson, and this may not take place until years later when he will remember the old man's words and understand his wisdom.

There are two kinds of stories: achimowana are stories about things that actually happened, historical events, although these may not be within the direct experience of the storyteller; atayohgewina are sacred stories, usually part of a cycle of stories in which the elements are recombined in various ways to make various kinds of points. It is these stories which are told by the old men, virtually exclusively. Younger people feel silly, even in the absence of an old person, telling these stories, although they are fully able to do so. In the absence of adults, children may practice telling these stories; but it is still the oldest child who is the storyteller. Because of the influence of the Christian missionaries, few Cree today will grant that these are sacred or religious stories; rather, they define them as part of a cultural heritage. It is through these stories that the children will learn what it means to be an Indian person.

The skill of a storyteller is notable. He is a performer and must design the appropriate performance for a particular occasion. In some cases, this involves a whole night of storytelling, in which the elder will continue as long as anyone is awake to listen to him. He knows this because the audience is expected to respond ehe (yes) at the segmentary pauses of his narrative. On other occasions, a single story may be told to make a special point.

In one example that we have analyzed (Darnell 1974), the old man told a single story in a culturally-appropriate manner which could not be captured simply by recording the text of his story. He began with an effort to move in gradual stages from the everyday world of a cabin on a reserve to the supernatural world of the traditional stories. In this case, the old man announced that he would tell us a story (the audience also included a number of Cree persons who had heard that the old man would speak and come to listen, which they did in respectful silence). The entire room was focused around the old

man. He sat in the room's one comfortable chair with everyone else at the edges of the room. His wife sat facing him and away from the rest of the audience. Two teenage boys stood behind him, virtually at attention. An adult couple and their small child squatted just inside the door. The middle-aged woman who was translating sat behind the old man's line of vision. And the host, himself over seventy, sat farther behind the old man and was silent unless directly addressed. This is the typical respect for an old person.

The old man began by emphasizing the importance of his stories and the need to treat them seriously. He made a traditional disclaimer of his own importance. He then went on to validate his status as a traditional Cree performer, speaking of his great age and his successful career as a hunter. Then he spoke about how Indian life used to be very difficult in the old days and about the early history of his community and family. This was followed by a traditional song which dealt with the special human spiritual powers which Indians had in the old days. With the story itself, the old man broke through from the everyday world to the supernatural. It was necessary for him to mark these reference points along the way so that the seriousness of his story would become apparent to his listeners. The story was about the creation of the Rocky Mountains and the establishment of many different races of people on the land. It concluded, "And in the end a lot of hardship and bad luck will come upon all these different races." The translator added a codicil that this was how the mountains were formed. What the old man said was that this was the way it was said when he was a child.

Having completed his story, the old man was then faced with the task of returning to the everyday world. He spoke directly to us in a much more conversational tone, saying that the man who made the mountains had predicted that someday men would begin to grow their beards again. His historical

remarks on beards were appropriate since both he and the author's husband had beards. He then moved from history to the present and wished that we would both live happily together for the rest of our lives and that he would meet us in the next world. He then clapped his hands to show that the story was finished. The transition from supernatural to everyday was made in reverse of the beginning of the story, part of the skill of this storyteller. To the extent that there was a moral or meaning to this story, it had to be extracted for each person individually. This is the traditional way.

There are other ways in which the etiquette of Cree differs substantially from that of middle class white society. The role of silence is extremely important, and proper silence is considered part of any important utterance (Darnell 1971a). Silence is also used to avoid ambiguous or potentially disruptive situations. Basso (1970) has noted that Western Apache do not talk to a child who returns home from boarding school until he makes the first move. They are waiting to see whether he has ceased to become one of them because of the alien environment of the school. White men are often uncomfortable with the silences common in Indian interaction, and rush to fill them with social formulae or trivial talk. This is perceived as frivolous at best and as rude and aggressive in many cases. He who would be wise must learn to be silent.

A great deal of emphasis is placed upon asking of questions, but their tone and timing are crucial. Children are expected to ask questions of an old man so that they can learn. But they must do so at segments of his narrative which allow for polite interruption. The skillful narrator will incorporate the questions into his narrative, for example, referring to the questions that he asked his grandfather when he was a child. It is, of course, very rude to interrupt at the wrong place or not to allow sufficient pause

before the question. These rules of etiquette are almost uniformly misunderstood by the schoolteacher who characterizes Cree children as silent and unresponsive.

It is impolite for a Cree person to tell someone else that he is wrong. Much of the dialogue in a classroom depends on correction of responses by the teacher. This is excruciatingly embarassing for the Cree child who is singled out. Indeed, even in the case of a correct answer, singling out one child is not appropriate. The children are a group in relation to the elders who teach them and the learning is to be shared by all. A correction is almost always made in the "yes, but..." form. Or the old person simply goes on talking and makes his own point in a different way. The child is never directly told that his answer was wrong. Cree children are expected to learn from this and not make the same mistake again. Competition for correct answers is inappropriate and will bring about peer-group disapproval. A friend of ours who has considerable aptitude in math recalls that he learned little math in school because there was always someone who did not understand. Realizing that the student would not ask questions to clarify his problems, this friend would continue to ask questions to which the teacher knew he knew the answers until everyone understood. The class did not progress quickly, partly because the teacher did not realize what he was doing.

To ask a question directly is rude because it places an obligation upon the person asked to reply in a particular way. Questions of the form "I wonder if it's the case that.." or "maybe thus-and-such would be possible" are much more likely to receive responses. If the person does not want to respond, he need not. If he wants to pick up the question, he can do so. To refuse a direct request is unthinkable. Native people often agree to do things to a white person so as not to appear rude, but have no intention of

carrying out their agreement. The question is one of etiquette. The oblique style of interaction is quite transparent, but preserves the individual autonomy of both persons. In any case, the answer is often that you should ask someone else about that. Again, the answer may come several days later, and it may be in the form of a story whose point is not immediately obvious.

A further principle of Cree etiquette is the avoidance of direct face-to-face contact, which is considered an affront to personal autonomy. Some of the teaching materials we helped to prepare were illustrated by a Cree artist and produced characteristic alignments which are far from typical of white society. The closest to a full-face portrait is one of grandfather, but the head is still slightly off center and the eyes look away from the viewer. Portraying father as a hunter (the attribute "good" is taken for granted and need not be specified), the artist showed a man with his back to the viewer, holding his gun and looking towards the woods in the background. Many of the portraits show individuals standing at right angle to the viewer, a posture which is also common in Cree interactions. An old man, particularly when he is speaking of important things, will look away from his audience, into space. Attention cannot be measured by direct eye contact, undoubtedly a source of frustration to schoolteachers.

Some years ago, the author observed a kindergarden class in a Cree community. Of the nineteen pupils, three were white. The Province of Alberta does not normally provide kindergarden for its students, but in areas where children showed consistent difficulty in school, such programs were implemented. The language skills in this class ranged from monolingual English through varying degrees of bilingualism to monolingual Cree. With the exception of the three white children, this did not seem to impede communication in informal interaction. The white children tended to ignore anything said

in Cree, to socialize only among themselves, and to monopolize the teacher and the educational toys. The teacher spoke no Cree in spite of two years in the community, and felt the social life of the community to be a negative influence on the children. There was no social mixture between the native and white subsets of the community. School, therefore, had little influence on the structure of the community. Because five-year-olds are very unimportant persons in the Cree social world, they could not transmit their learning or use it in their home life. Parents were generally told that they could not help their children in school, that this was the school's job. Therefore, they considered a child to be doing well in school if the child had a perfect attendance record.

The major skill practiced in the classroom often appeared to be disruption. The children who mastered this art were among the most intelligent. One little girl would rattle off the names of colors in the wrong order; if she seemed about to lose her place as the center of attention, she would produce them in the correct order without even looking at the samples. The rote learning was accomplished but she did not have any interest in demonstrating her knowledge. The class found this extremely amusing. In contrast, however, when a child who was somewhat retarded could not name the colors, the class listened in respectful silence, in an effort not to embarrass this child. This behavior is completely consistent with Cree etiquette.

In defense of such a program (described in more detail in Darnell 1971b), the Cree-speaking children did acquire a working knowledge of English, and, perhaps more importantly, of classroom routines which made their entrance into the regular school system easier. The difficulties were not, however, primarily linguistic. The teacher placed great emphasis on social formulae of politeness and was dubiously successful in getting the children to use them

in interaction with her. However, among themselves, even the most disruptive children would accord the respect of politeness and do so in English. Cree children are not used to many of these formulae. Introductions and greetings are virtually absent, except under very marked social conditions; farewells are equally unmarked by verbal formula. It is polite not to single people out and to enjoy the co-presence of a group. A "visit" may take place without a word being exchanged among the parties to it. Information about an unknown person may be obtained as a side conversation or at some later time, but it should not interrupt the flow of conversation. That Cree children learn to deal with the vastly different expectations of the white school system is a credit to the program, although not necessarily the best way to maintain their own cultural integrity.

The children generally spoke English with a heavy Cree accent. However, in social formulae, and memorized songs and games, they were able to speak almost totally without an accent. Their normal conversational English was the variety normally spoken in the community. Both in phonology and in semantic structure, it was heavily influenced by Cree, even for people who spoke only English. Since this has been a source of difficulty in the school system, we proposed that realistically it is necessary to describe such communities in terms of four languages rather than two:

Traditional or "high" Cree is spoken by old people on formal occasions. Although not everyone uses it, or even understands it, it is the "real" Cree and the language which symbolizes the Indian identity of the people. The children must be able to learn this kind of Cree if they are to maintain their Indian-ness. As the young people move through a traditional Cree life cycle, they will become increasingly attuned to this style of Cree, which carries most of the expressive functions of the language. This language is valued

as the means by which cultural tradition can be adapted to the modern world.

The Cree which is spoken under normal conditions, particularly by young people, may be referred to as Conversational Cree. It is heavily Anglicized and many people feel that it is not the "real" Cree. Much of the focus on language maintenance deals with improving this normal spoken Cree and ensuring that the children will have access to Traditional Cree. Without this, fluency in the native language is severely limited.

The Cree which is spoken in the communities of northern Alberta has had considerable influence on English. We identify a Cree-English which is spoken by most bilingual children when they enter the classroom. It is the English spoken by their parents and it is stigmatized in the classroom. Cree-English is spoken by individuals who do not know the Cree language at all. This is because the phonology and conceptual system of Cree are the basic speech models available, even to monolingual speakers of English. Such a language constitutes a community-level adaptation to a bilingual environment and today maintains itself without direct reference to the native language. Parents who attempt to speak English to their children at home speak Cree-English.

The fourth language of the community is the most peripheral--it is Standard English, represented only by the schoolteacher and a few other whites in the community who have limited interaction with the native community. There is obviously little opportunity for native students to use Standard English outside the classroom. They would be ridiculed for using it at home, even in families where English is habitually or exclusively spoken.

Teachers almost always fail to understand that the English spoken by their native students is a local form developed through particular historical contacts. The result is often a progressive withdrawal of native students from their enforced education by not participating. Less violence would be

done to the integrity and self-confidence of the child if the English of the community were accepted as a communicative medium, along with a gradual introduction of the forms of Standard English. Under the present system, the Cree child can only be confused and alienated from his family and community. This model of bilingualism was devised for a particular community, but seems to us to apply generally to the situation in small communities throughout northern Canada. It is a fact with which the educational system must deal.

In response to many of the problems outlined briefly above, we attempted (Darnell and Vanek 1971) to design educational programming for television which would incorporate Cree attitudes toward learning and teaching, as well as present some traditional Cree materials. We were inspired to this position through our critique of the popular Sesame Street programs as cultural-bound. They were, of course, designed for American ghetto children, although their success seems greater with white middle class children. Today, Sesame Street as shown in Canada includes segments which deal with cultural and linguistic diversity, for example, with an old man playing a drum or with a child learning to make bannock. Programs designed specifically for native children may still, however, fill an important function.

Our proposal suggested a cast of four to six children who were reasonably bilingual, an old man and an old woman, and preferably a young woman. The old people would be able to present traditional cultural activities as well as to tell traditional stories. Activities are sharply divided along sex lines, so that a woman could not describe hunting and a man could not describe tanning of hides. Even if the individuals had the knowledge, it would be inappropriate for them to impart it. A young man (having more status than a young woman) would be able to illustrate ways of making a living and to impart a familial atmosphere. The set for our pilot was an Indian

cabin. We argued that it should also be possible to move outdoors, since learning by doing and observing should take place under natural conditions. We proposed a series of twenty programs, each containing six different kinds of material.

Twenty stories were chosen from the Wisahketchak cycle which would illustrate the traditional way of life. The old man, the focus of the room though off-center from the camera, would tell these stories to the children. It is interesting that in the pilot the camera technicians were unable to avoid direct close-ups of the old man's face in spite of instructions to do so. In the pilot, the initial story of the cycle was told in both Cree and English. The children seemed to prefer the Cree versions, measured by the nature of their attention. The old man had a different version of the introductory story of the cycle and was virtually unable to tell the one written in the tentative script, because it was not his story. His initial rendition of the story which had been illustrated in advance consisted of about six sentences. We obtained greater elaboration only with extreme difficulty and the use of cue cards. While performing the traditional role of telling his own stories to the children, however, the old man was extremely effective.

Each program was also to include an illustration of some traditional activity. These were arranged in sets of four for each of the four seasons. Four is the sacred number in Cree philosophy. The fifth program in each set had to do with native history. In the pilot film, the old man explained to the children how to make a drum. He began what he considered to be a trivial explanation by saying that first you had to take the hide off the animal. From his point of view, of course, you do not tell someone how to make a drum, you show them. That way they will learn. This underlines the necessity for teaching methods to be the same ones which would normally be used in a Cree community.

A third portion of the program was devoted to concepts of grammar. We suggested that it would be possible to act out differences in the grammatical categories of Cree and English. We designed a story to illustrate that Cree distinguished between inclusion and exclusion of the addressee in the first person plural. The bear, the rabbit and the beaver were going together to a pow-wow. The bear and the beaver did not want rabbit to accompany them because he was too dumb. Every Cree child already knows that rabbits are dumb; anyone can catch a rabbit. The grammatical distinction would arise naturally as the animals discussed their travel plans. The rabbit misunderstood and thought that he was included, but the bear and the beaver were actually using the other "we" which did not include him. The two animals set off and the rabbit was left behind and was very sad. This is similar in many ways to the stories which the children have already heard about the activities of various animals. The only problem with our pilot in this case was that the old man did not speak English well enough to see the distinction which was being discussed.

We also attempted to deal with the ubiquitous Cree distinction which is usually referred to in the literature as animate and inanimate. We have looked at this distinction in some detail (Darnell and Vanek 1977) and have argued that the important feature is that of "power" rather than of livingness in the traditional English sense. Of course, Cree speakers know that a stone is not alive. But they also know that a particular stone may be a source of spiritual power; thus, it is classified as alive or having power. There is a logical basis to the semantic category of animate in Cree and we felt that this logic could be made at least partially explicit through discussion of things which are animate and things which are not.

Our section on contrast of Cree and English sound systems was a disaster, largely because the old man had only one phonological system and it was Cree. A younger and more fluently bilingual person could presumably make these contrasts more successfully. For example, In English /t/ is apico-alveolar and aspirated; in Cree it is apico-dental and unaspirated. Cree children further tend not to hear the distinction between English /t/ and /th/. For example, to the question "How do you say three trees?" one of the children responded. "nine." He had taken the question as being one of mathematics and thought he had answered correctly.

A further section attempted to introduce similar vocabulary in Cree and English, stressing that different people had different ways to express the same things. The pilot rather uneventfully illustrated that greetings could be made in either language. This section was also intended to teach perceptual discrimination, e.g. of shape or color. In instances where the conceptualization was different in Cree and English, this could be made explicit.

Finally, we presented a section on numbers, assuming that numbers were exactly the same thing in both languages and that the children would learn to generalize about the nature of counting things. This proved to be the most interesting portion of the pilot project, in that the old man used our fabricated materials to produce a spontaneous learning experience. He was given cards with the Cree and English words for one, a card with the symbol 1, and a card with a realistic picture of a moose. He and the children agreed that you could not mix languages, saying peyak moose or one moswa. He then asked the children which language the symbol 1 was in. They all agreed that it was in English. That is, counting is something they associate with school and white men. The old man did not correct them directly. He asked if the Chinese had a word for 1, then if the Ukraininas had a word for 1. This is, of course, one of the points that we had hoped to make.

There were a number of difficulties with this project, one of which was that it never received funding beyond the pilot. The actors were unrehearsed and the whole pilot was done in only two days. Nevertheless, we demonstrated to our own satisfaction that the principles of Cree teaching and learning could be incorporated into teaching materials in a serious way. Our aim was to encourage Cree children to value their own culture, simultaneously learning more about the white world so that they could choose their own amalgam of languages and cultures. The unedited films from the project have been invaluable in teaching because they illustrate the differences in teaching style which are effective with Cree children. It is very difficult to describe these things verbally to someone who has not observed them. And the average white schoolteacher does not get many opportunities to observe traditional Cree etiquette, simply because of her role of authority within the white school system.

In the final analysis, it seems clear that the conflict between the communicative system of the Cree child, whatever language he/she speaks, and the school system has its roots in interactional etiquette. If teachers are to be successful in communicating with their Cree students, they must learn to bridge this gap. Certainly the students do not have the capacity to understand differences in etiquette to which they have not been consistently exposed. We are not suggesting that the school must become an Indian cultural institution, simply that it must take account of the culture and etiquette of native students and encourage those students to value both their native heritage and the education which is being presented to them. Increased use of familiar teaching strategies and interactional patterns will serve this end.

Footnotes

1. This paper was originally prepared for the First International Congress for the Study of Child Language, Tokyo, 1978. Anthony Vanek has been my collaborator in much of the research reported here. Erving Goffman has convinced me that an adequate theory of interaction will emerge only through cross-cultural perspective.

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REFLECTIONS ON CREE INTERACTIONAL ETIQUETTE:

RELEVANCE STATEMENT

This paper explores the educational implications of Cree interactional etiquette, especially in contrast to Anglo middle class North American interactional etiquette. The Cree are one of the largest North American Indian societies. There are more than 70,000 Cree in northern Canada and both the language and the culture are viable. Interactional etiquette is the author's term for the verbal as well as the non-verbal conventions behaviors that are involved in communication among individuals. Examples of verbal interactional etiquette are how to greet, take-leave, ask questions, disagree, and interrupt. Examples of non-verbal interactional etiquette are eye contact, posture and spatial positioning within a room.

There are significant differences between Cree and North American middle class patterns of interactional etiquette. The Cree communicate more with silence, interrupt less, and ask questions less directly than non-Indian North Americans. Old people, especially old men, play the central role in traditional education. The patterns of interactional etiquette described in this paper for the Cree are also quite common in other North American Indian groups. The result is a potential for misunderstanding and conflict in classrooms which are based on the Anglo middle class North American model, often with a woman teacher.

The author does not propose that the Canadian school system switch to a traditional Indian way of teaching. Rather, she argues that it is important for teachers to be aware of and sensitive to the different patterns of interactional etiquette their students bring with them to the classroom. The successes and failures of a pilot TV project, attempting to incorporate principles of Cree learning and teaching, are described.

The author also discusses the English spoken by the Cree and points out that while it is different in some ways from other varieties of English, there are historical reasons for this, and Cree-English should not be stigmatized by teachers.